

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /087 W
-----120128 262351Z /75

R 261130Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6568
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 5245

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, SS, MO, MR, AG, LY
SUBJ: MOROCCAN FONMIN OFFICIAL ON WESTERN SAHARA AND MAURITANIA

1. FOREIGN MINISTRY POLITICAL DIRECTOR AHMED CHERKAOUI
DISCUSSED WESTERN SAHARA AT SOME LENGTH DURING AN
AUGUST 25 CALL BY CHARGE AND POLCOUNS. A USFP STALWART,
CERKAOUI WAS BROUGHT BACK TO THE ISTIQLAL-LED FOREIGN
MINISTRY EARLIER THIS MONTH ON THE KING'S INITIATIVE
AND HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN TASKED BY THE KING TO COORDINATE
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SUPPORT ON THE SAHARA QUESTION.
HE SERVED IN FONMIN AS SECRETARY OF STATE 1974-1977 AND
HAS LONG BEEN A FORTHCOMING AND INSIGHTFUL SOURCE OF GOM
VIEWS. HE NOTED THAT HIS KNOWLEDGE WAS INCOMPLETE SINCE
THE SAHARA WAS NATURALLY A PROBLEM ON WHICH KING
HASSAN WOULD TAKE THE LEAD.

2. ALLUDING TO THE KING'S AUGUST 20 SPEECH (RABAT 5152),
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CHERKAOUI SAID THE MOROCCAN POSITION WAS NOW CLEAR:
THE CONSIDERABLE NATIONAL SACRIFICE TO DATE IN LIVES
LOST AND ECONOMIC STRAINS PRECLUDED MOROCCO'S CEDING ON
THE INTEGRITY OF ITS "OWN" TERRITORY AND THE ESTABLISH-
MENT OF A STATE SEPARATING IT FROM MAURITANIA. FRANCE,
THE IVORY COAST AND SPAIN, WHO HAD ADVANCED SUGGESTIONS
FOR PEACE PLANS, WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT THIS FACT. ON THE

OTHER HAND, MAURITANIA'S DESIRE TO END ITS PART IN THE WAR WAS ALSO STRONG AND PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE. MAURITANIA WAS NOT CAPABLE OF PROLONGED FIGHTING, AND MOROCCO'S OWN ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES LIMITED ITS ABILITY TO HELP. THERE WAS NO CLEAR WAY OUT OF THIS STALEMATE AND LITTLE APPARENT ROOM FOR MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE.

3. CHERKAOUI NOTED THAT AMONG THE "IDEAS" FOR A SOLUTION WAS A MAURITANIAN FEDERATION WITH THREE "LARGELY AUTONOMOUS" REGIONS, ONE FOR THE SAHAROUIS. (HE WOULD GO NO FURTHER TOWARD IDENTIFYING THE SOURCE OF THESE "IDEAS" THAN SAYING THE KING "HAD NOT EXCLUDED A MAURITANIAN SOLUTION.") CHERKAOUI WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT EARLY MOVEMENT ON SUCH A SOLUTION. EVEN IN THE LONGER TERM THERE WERE PROBLEMS: A FEDERATION MIGHT PRODUCE, PARTICULARLY IN MAURITANIA'S PRESENT UNSETTLED STATE, CENTRIFUGAL FORCES WHICH WOULD DISMEMBER THE COUNTRY. THE POLISARIO WOULD VIEW SUCH A STEP AS ONLY A PROVISIONAL SOLUTION. THE ALGERIANS WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT THE ABSENCE OF A COMMON BORDER WITH A NEW SAHAROUI ENTITY AND THEREBY ACCESS TO THE ATLANTIC. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT SUCH POSSIBILITIES MADE MOROCCO CAUTIOUS ABOUT A "FEDERATED MAURITANIA" PROPOSAL.

4. CHERKAOUI SAID THAT THE KING'S HARSH WORDS FOR LIBYA IN HIS SPEECH WERE IN PART A REACTION TO THE VISIT TO
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MAURITANIA OF A LIBYAN DELEGATION (A SERIES OF LIBYA-MAURITANIA ECONOMIC ACCORDS WAS ANNOUNCED ON THE DAY FOLLOWING THE SPEECH.) CHERKAOUI SAID THAT WHILE THERE WAS INDEED CAUSE FOR CONCERN ABOUT LIBYA'S ROLE, HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT OULD SALECK WAS A MAN WOULD NOT ACT RASHLY. SALECK, CHERKAOUI SAID, HAD BEEN ON THE VERGE OF COMING TO MOROCCO LAST WEEK BUT THE TRIP HAD BEEN CANCELED AT THE LAST MINUTE. HE DOUBTED THAT THE VISIT WOULD BE RESCHEDULED SOON AS MAURITANIAN ATTENTION WOULD NOW BE INCREASINGLY FOCUSED ON "NEXT MONTH'S" ARAB SUMMIT WHICH WOULD PRESUMABLY PROVIDE SALECK AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH ARAB LEADERS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978RABAT05245
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780350-0685
Format: TEL
From: RABAT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780819/aaaaapzn.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 912af25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1607975
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MOROCCAN FONMIN OFFICIAL ON WESTERN SAHARA AND MAURITANIA
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, SS, MO, MR, AG, LY, WI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/912af25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014